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This handbook gives advice to the adult learner on such problems as effectively concentrating and listening, improving reading skills, responsibly participating in group discussions, and taking tests successfully. Also included are discussions concerning adults' learning processes and efficient study habits. Concluding chapters deal with the use of community resources and television, and give advice on how to continue learning every day. (se)

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HOW ADULTS CAN LEARN MORE--FASTER

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The National Association for Public School Adult Education

A Practical Handbook for Adult Students

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HOW ADULTS CAN LEARN MORE-- FASTER

A Practical Handbook for Adult Students

The National Association for Public School Adult Education

HOW ADULTS CAN LEARN MORE—FASTER was written by Virginia B. Warren, Director of Publication and Promotion, National Association for Public School Adult Education.

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Introduction

You are in an adult learning group—or expect to be in one soon. How can you get the most out of it?

It may be a training session conducted by your employer. It may be a Red Cross class in first aid. You may be working to complete your high-school education or get an A.B. degree; you may be in a Great Books discussion group; you may be in a study group of your civic association or League of Women Voters working on problems of traffic safety, urban renewal, or unemployment. You may be a service man attending classes on your military installation. Perhaps you are learning a new trade or skill to get a better job. You may be learning in your own home by watching an educational program on television.

The following chapters will help you make your adult learning "pay off." You'll learn how to read faster, how to concentrate, how to listen, how to take tests and exams, how to be a successful group participant. You'll receive practical insights into your own individual learning ability—based on recent findings in the psychology of adult learning.

Many social scientists have explored the psychology of the adult learner in recent years. Why? Because adult education is one of the most exciting and important movements in education today. Some 9 million American adults are engaged in a more or less formal learning activity. An estimated 3 million are learning through programs sponsored by their local public schools. During peacetime, practically all military personnel are engaged in some form of adult education, as they are trained for their military careers. In addition, each year there are approximately 400,000 enrollments by military personnel who attend classes during off-duty time. In addition to these millions, more adults are getting together to improve their communities, to become wiser voters, better parents, and to learn more about national and international affairs.

Whether you are 18 or 80, the decisions you make can affect the physical and mental health of your family, the well-being of your neighborhood and community, the very existence of your country.

In order to shoulder this tremendous burden, you must learn about many subjects. You must learn how to work with others to bring about wise solutions.

This handbook will help you in these two very important areas of learning.

How To Use This Book

First look over the Table of Contents. Pick out the topic that fits your particular needs and read that chapter first. For example, if you are a slow reader, turn first to "Steps to Faster Reading." The tips you pick up there will help you in reading and absorbing this handbook.

As you read this handbook, do so with a pencil beside you. Underscore ideas you can use immediately. When you see some that really hit home, type or print them on small cards and fasten them to the wall over your desk, on your kitchen bulletin board, or on the front of your notebook.

Carry this handbook with you, in your briefcase or handbag, along with your notebook, textbook, and other reading materials. You'll want to refer to it frequently.

If you find that you would like to explore a particular topic in great depth—group participation, for example—reread Chapter 8, which tells you how to find and use sources of information in your own community.

Chapter 1

Adult Education Is Different

Yes, adult education is different from school as you remember it. Understand that, and you have taken the first step toward successful adult learning.

How is it different?

For one thing, the decision to continue learning was made by you. Except for inservice training programs and some on-the-job instruction (and, of course, schools for traffic violators), most adults participate in adult education because they want to.

Adult education is a part-time activity. Study habits must be built into and around your daily life—earning a living, bringing up a family, taking part in community life.

In adult learning groups, the teacher or leader is seldom a person with authority over you. You can tell him exactly what you think and feel. You and the teacher or group leader will discuss problems as adult equals. As one director of adult education put it, "We frequently have students call at our office after the first session with complaints about the teachers. I suggest that they return to the next session and discuss their complaints with the teacher. They seem never to have thought of this. Usually they agree to go back and try this. One of the differences between a child student and an adult student is that an adult can make recommendations or discuss methods with the teacher."

Adult education is different, too, because *you* are different. You are no longer a child. You've had experiences, developed opinions, acquired practical know-how in

some field. Because of this, you can make a contribution to class learning.

There are more ways in which adult education is different—and happily so!

- Your class may be very informal. Don't be surprised if you find yourself sitting around a table discussing a given topic. The teacher, in this case serves as discussion leader. You may find yourself attending a series of "town hall" lectures on national affairs or "brainstorming" ways to solve a community problem, such as the transit system or rezoning.
- Examinations have no part in many adult classes. The objective in all adult classes is learning, to be sure, but you may not have to "pass" or get credits for college so "marks" on your progress may not be necessary.
- You'll learn from your classmates, too. One of the interesting aspects of adult education is that you learn from your fellow students as well as from your teacher. Your partners in learning are adults, with years of experience in living behind them. Their comments and questions will reflect their practical knowledge. It is up to you to make your contribution to learning, too, by speaking up at discussion time . . . sharing your knowledge . . . asking pertinent questions when they occur to you.
- Your teacher may be younger than you are. It comes as a jolt to some adult students when they have a teacher younger than they are. Don't let this throw you. Your teacher, even though young, may be an acknowledged authority in his field. You don't have to feel a bit strange about learning what he has to offer you.
- Your learning is up to you. You won't be "nagged" to do outside studying and reading as you might have been by your parents in your early years. You're on your own!

Chapter 2

How Adults Learn

Adults CAN Learn

You probably have heard a friend say, "I'm too old to learn new ways of doing things" or "I can't memorize things the way I did when I was a kid."

Maybe you've made such statements yourself. Many adults say things like that and honestly believe them. But they are wrong. Research has proved it.

Here are some facts researchers have discovered about adult learners:

- *Contrary to popular opinion, the mind does not deteriorate with age.* Some time ago, a group of 50-year-olds were given the same intelligence test they had taken 31 years before. They made higher scores in every part of the test except the part on arithmetical reasoning. Men from 20 to 83 years of age took a course in world affairs at the University of Chicago. The older students were more successful and continued to study the subject for a longer time than the younger students.
- *Adults are able to do "fast memorizing" more efficiently than young children.* If you must quickly memorize some facts to use in a speech later on in the afternoon or in an exam that's coming up in a couple of weeks, don't despair. You're better at this kind of short-term memorizing than children are. Children are better—but only a little better—than you are in memorizing facts and retaining them for long periods.

Age Is No Excuse!

"Age in itself . . . is relatively unimportant as a barrier to learning. What is of greater significance is the combination of basic capacity, energy, experience, and motivation, which, with proper guidance, can lead to improved skills, better understandings, increased knowledge, alteration of values, and an enrichment of adult life."—*Peter E. Siegle, Research Associate, Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults, Chicago*

"In general, nobody under 55 years of age should ever restrain himself from trying to learn anything because of fear that he is too old to learn; nor should he use that fear as an excuse for not learning anything he ought to learn. If he fails in learning, inability due directly to age will very rarely, if ever, be the reason."—*Irving Lorge, executive officer, Institute of Psychological Research, Teachers College, Columbia University*

- *Adult learners have a great advantage over youngsters: their years of experience in living.* As you have noticed, it is easier to learn something new when you already know a little bit about the subject. It is easier for a printer to learn something new about the press he operates than to learn some facts about electronics. In other words, *you learn more easily, and you remember longer, when you have some previous experience* to which you can relate the new facts.

- *Adults learn more efficiently because they have stronger reasons for learning.* When adults *do* want to learn, they do a fast and efficient job of it. That's because they have a strong practical motive, desire for a better job, desire to solve urgent community problems, desire to solve family or personal problems.

HOW Do Adults Learn?

Many studies of adult learning have been made in recent years. They show that adults learn in very different ways than children and teenagers.

Knowing how and why adult learning is different, you will be able to learn more—faster.

You Must WANT to Learn

As an adult, you aren't forced to learn. There is no law that says you must. The only motives you have are inside yourself, and they must be powerful ones. Now is the time to search your soul: *What are your real reasons for being in this adult learning group?* Are they strong enough to make you attend class regularly, listen attentively, contribute to the group, study hard ?

If your motives are weak (maybe you're in a job-training group set up by management and it wasn't really your idea to come)—remember this: *motives can be strengthened.* If the boss told you to attend this class, and it bores you, maybe you haven't yet seen how it can help you in your job. Look for ways you can use the new information. Try hard, and see if you can put at least one new thing into use immediately. If it works, your motives for attending class will be strengthened. Think what greater efficiency at your job can mean to you . . . better job, higher salary. You have to *want* to learn, or you won't learn . . . but you can *make* yourself want to learn.

You Must Squelch Your Doubts And Fears

If you lack confidence in your ability to learn, you'll find this blocking your ability to concentrate, to memorize, to speak up in class, to study, to take tests.

If you doubt your ability to learn, what can you do about it? How can you build up self-confidence? Here are some ways: 1) Remember that failures you had as a child may have been for reasons that have no relation to you today. 2) Remember that you were new to learning in those days. Today you come to class as an experienced adult who has learned enough in his lifetime to hold down a job. 3) *Concentrate on your successes.* You didn't have a bit of trouble learning that new technique on the job, did you? You can probably rattle off baseball statistics and batting averages with ease. You may be a demon typist and a whiz at shorthand.

You Learn By Doing

The best way to learn anything and to remember it for long periods of time is to put the information to use as quickly and as frequently as possible. For example, let's say you want to learn a new way to add large sums in your head. Read about the method in a book, study it, and you may remember it for several days. If after studying it, you actually use the new technique in your work the very next day, you'll probably remember it for a week or more. *If you have an opportunity to use the new technique frequently from that time on, it will soon be second nature to you.* You won't have any trouble remembering it.

You Are Sensitive To Failure

Adults, even more than children, are sensitive to failure in their learning situations. If they don't experience immediate success, if they feel they are asking stupid questions or are less "hep" to the subject than their classmates, they are ready to give up. If you feel this way in your adult class, if you don't enjoy any feeling of success in what you are doing there, have a talk with the teacher. He may be able to point out reasons for your lack of success, or he may show you that you are actually a more successful learner than you realize.

You Learn What Has *Personal Meaning* For You

It is hard to remember facts and figures that have no relationship to you personally. For example, let's say you have just seen a film on salesmanship. You viewed it with a friend who is in selling, but the film didn't mean much to you because you're a technician, not a salesman. You were bored during the showing. You promptly forgot the "message" presented. A few weeks later your company informed you that your job was going to include some selling as well as technical trouble-shooting. You made a point of viewing the film again. This time you watched differently. You may have placed *yourself* in the film, as if you were the central character. You came away with some specific pointers about selling, and you determined to put them to use the very next day. *The film now had personal meaning for you, and you had no trouble remembering and using its "educational message."*

Two Roadblocks To Learning

1. *A negative feeling about yourself.* If you, consciously or unconsciously, think of yourself as unliked, unwanted, unable, you may be so busy defending yourself against others and striking out at others that you don't have time or energy to learn.

   How can you learn in spite of this drawback?

   You may need psychological counseling before you can make use of your full learning ability. Lack of a good self-concept usually stems from the early years of one's life. It is often found in individuals who have had few successful experiences and little praise during their youth. It may also occur, however, when an individual feels that his social or economic background is inferior to that of others in the class.

2. *Strong resistance to change.* Children come to school with few preconceived ideas and convictions. They are open-minded, curious, and eager to hear and accept new ideas and information. Many adults come to a new learning experience encased in a heavy armor of prejudices and convictions which they are most unwilling to change.

   How can you learn in spite of this drawback?

   Remind yourself, from time to time, that it is a sign of age to become rigid in your thinking and that if you want to stay young you must try new ways, assimilate new ideas, entertain new thoughts.

Chapter 3

How To Get The Most Out of Your Group Sessions

"Each learner brings to the learning situation his skills, or lack of skills, in group membership. If he lacks the ability to work effectively with others in a group situation, it is difficult for him to enter into the human transaction of learning." —*Forces in Learning*, National Training Laboratories, NEA

What practical, specific things can you do to squeeze the utmost learning out of your adult classes, discussion sessions, seminars?

If you find, after answering the following questions with complete honesty, that you have not been participating enough, resolve *today* to be a better group member. Then watch how your adult class will come alive, for you and for everyone else in it.

How Good A Group Participant Am I?

1. *Do I propose new ideas, activities, and procedures?* Or do I just sit and listen?
2. *Do I ask questions?* Or am I shy about admitting that I do not understand?
3. *Do I share my knowledge when it will prove helpful to the problem at hand?* Or do I keep it to myself, fearing I may be wrong?
4. *Do I speak up if I feel strongly about something?* Or am I shy about giving an opinion?
5. *Do I try to bring together our ideas and activities?* Or do I concentrate only on details under immediate discussion and think it's up to the teacher to summarize?

6. *Do I understand the goals of the group and try to direct discussion toward them?* Or do I get off the track easily? If I'm not clear about goals do I ask about them?
7. *Do I ever question the practicality or the logic of a project, and do I evaluate afterwards?* Or do I always accept without question the things we do?
8. *Do I help to arrange chairs, and even help clean up when the session is over?* Or do I prefer to be waited on?
9. *Do I encourage my fellow students to do well?* Or am I indifferent to or actually critical of their efforts and achievements?
10. *Do I prod the group to undertake worthy projects that will accelerate learning?* Or am I satisfied with mediocre projects—"busy work"?
11. *Am I a mediator and a peacemaker?* Or do I allow ill feeling to develop? If it does, do I consider it the teacher's job to handle it?
12. *Am I willing to compromise in some situations (except where basic issues such as truth and justice are involved)?* Or do I remain inflexible in my point of view?
13. *Do I encourage others to participate and help everyone to have a fair chance to speak?* Or do I sit by while some people hog the floor, and do I sometimes dominate it myself?

If you feel that you are not getting out of your adult class what you expected when you signed up, chances are it contains one or more of the following "bad actors." Read this list carefully. If you see something of yourself in one or more of these negative characters, don't despair. The list shows you what you can do to improve yourself.

There's One in Every Group: Are You It?

Are You A Thumb-Twirler?

The thumb-twirler has decided that the presentation of the teacher is boring. Classwork seems impractical. He doesn't feel free to participate. The classroom facilities are poor. Sitting back and twirling his thumbs, he is learning very little. *Is this you?* If so, talk to the teacher and with him try to analyze why you aren't interested. Maybe he isn't teaching the kind of things you really need. If class projects seem impractical, how about suggesting some alternate projects and getting the group enthusiastic about your ideas? Feel free to gripe to the teacher about classroom conditions, too. Maybe you and he can organize a small committee to work together for better lighting, more equipment, etc.

Are You a Sidetracker?

The sidetracker delays the opening of class and takes every opportunity to lead class discussions down conversational sidetracks. That's because the topic the class is working on doesn't seem important to him, and he wants to work on something else. (Sidetracks may be entertaining, but they don't take you to your destination, learning.) *Is this you?* If so—look for ways that the current

project can be of practical use to you. Take part in it, even if only to discover why and how it's not valuable. Next time, you'll be wise to play a bigger part in the initial planning for class activities—presenting lists of possible projects, discussing them, taking part in decision-making.

Are You A Lost Soul?

The lost soul feels that the class work is too advanced for him. He tries, but he doesn't know exactly what is expected of him. He gets behind and can't seem to catch up. While he's trying to find his way, he's not learning the subject at hand. *Is this you?* If so—confide in your teacher. Maybe he is proceeding too fast, and you may not be the only student who is floundering. He may be able to suggest outside reading material that will make things clear. Perhaps he can give you some individualized help. Don't keep your puzzlement to yourself. You may be doing the members of the group a favor by speaking up about your difficulties. Some of them may be floundering, too!

Are You A Chatterbox?

The chatterbox may feel that the class is too elementary, and his attention is not held. He may feel a strong need to gain attention and recognition. Whatever his reasons, he—perhaps unknowingly—drowns his nonlearning and the learning of others in a sea of words. *Is this you?* If so—try to figure out why you feel the urge to talk. If the course is too simple for you, tell the teacher. He may assign more advanced outside reading; he may point out why it is good for you to review the fundamentals of the subject before proceeding. If you talk because you have a strong urge to be "on stage" at all times, why not sign up for a course, such as dramatics or public speaking, that will put that desire to good use.

Are You A Silent Partner?

Maybe the silent partner feels that the other students know more than he does, so he doesn't want to speak up and reveal his ignorance. Maybe he is drowned out by two or three strong-minded persons who dominate the group at every session. Whatever the reasons, he seldom opens his mouth during class sessions. His silence hamstrings both his learning and the learning of others.

So the silent one shouldn't be afraid to speak up. His contributions may be more constructive than those of his more talkative classmates. *Is this you?* If so—get together with other silent ones in the class and compare notes. Maybe they feel the way you do. If so, approach the teacher and tell him your problem. If he's a good teacher, he'll work with other members of the class to soft-pedal the outspoken class members and give you silent partners more opportunities to sound off and ask questions. (Research shows that one of the best ways to increase your own understanding of a subject is to be forced to explain it.

Chapter 4

How To Listen and Take Notes

Adult students do a lot of their learning by listening. That's because so many adult classes involve group discussions, lectures, and talks by local authorities. The teacher explains; students comment and discuss. Talk—of one kind or another—takes up a major portion of the average adult class. If your mind tends to wander while others talk, you're missing a lot of learning.

The Board of Education of the City of New York says that students need to develop their listening skills, in order to

> "Follow oral directions, follow group discussions and speeches, take notes, select main ideas, retain details, spot half-truths, question sources, and enjoy theater and music."

So—how good a listener are you?

Do you "turn off your ears" when a dull speaker drones on and on? Do you stare out of the window, shuffle your feet, think about a movie you saw last week? Are you easily distracted by noises outside of the classroom or by other class members? Do you ever *work at listening*—or do you just sit and let the words flow over and around you?

Listen for use

This is probably the *most practical and effective way* to train yourself to be a good listener. It is used by many people who, because of their work or the kind of educational program they are in, must spend a lot of time listening to speeches, attending conferences, taking part in group discussions. Listening for use simply means that you look for ways that the speaker's words can be of practical

help to you. Here's how Professor Ralph G. Nichols, Chairman of the Department of Rhetoric, University of Minnesota, describes the process:

> "Whenever we wish to listen efficiently, we ought to say to ourselves: What is he saying that I can use? What worthwhile ideas has he? Is he reporting any workable procedures? Anything with which I can make myself happier?"

Listen for the basic thought

Even the dullest, most long-winded speaker is trying to make a point. He has a message to get across. The title of his talk is your first clue to that message. Jot it down in your notebook As he talks, concentrate hard, listening for the grain of content in the chaff of words. You'll find that listening is an active, dynamic thing. You'll get a happy feeling of accomplishment when you figure out what the speaker is actually saying about the subject. You'll discover that what he is saying usually breaks down to the following points: Is he for it or against it? What are his reasons? What are his solutions? What authorities does he quote? You'll find that you can usually put the rock-hard facts of a speech or lecture into a few concise sentences. The rest of the talk is just window-dressing. For example, an hour-long talk on teacher education might appear in your notes in this way:

Topic: Teacher education
Angle: Should be improved
How to do it: Six ways (list ways)
Who's doing anything about it?
Five groups (list groups)
Major problem: Methodology vs. Subject matter
a) Methodologists say—
b) Subject matter side says—

Listen with pencil in hand

Most experienced students have one hard and fast rule. They are never without a pencil and paper. They know that even the most intelligent listening is of little practical use if you can't remember what you've heard. They know that the best memory aids ever invented are pencil and paper. Get this good habit. Make it as automatic to carry pencil and paper as it is to carry wallet and house key.

Soon you'll never listen without taking notes. You'll jot down a helpful point the teacher made . . . practical tips the local expert gave when he talked to the class . . . the "quotable quotes" you heard in a radio program (you may be able to use one of the quotes in your next speech or exam paper). You'll find this a useful habit in your everyday life, as well as a way to learn more effectively.

Don't feel shy or diffident about making notes, no matter where you are. Only individuals with phenomenal memories can recall everything they hear after a day or two. You'll find that America's busiest executives are addicted to the "write-it-down" habit.

Do some "practice" listening

To improve your ability to listen constructively, give yourself

a listening "assignment." Tune in on a radio speech, preferably on a topic that is not of great interest to you. Listen with two purposes in mind: *Purpose #1:* To look for ideas *you can use* . . . that will help you in your home life or daily work . . . that will improve you in any way. *Purpose #2:* To put down in five sentences exactly what the speech is all about . . . the heart of the speaker's message.

Self-assigned listening projects like this will soon sharpen your listening skill and make you a more successful adult learner.

Listen critically

Critical "tongue-in-cheek" listening has never been more important than it is today. We are bombarded with political propaganda, advertising commercials, "slanted" news stories. It is essential that we sharpen our critical sense and develop a healthy "You gotta show me!" attitude toward everything we hear. How can we do this? Here are some ways:

- Listen for "sneaky" phrases unbacked by facts, such as "They say" (who sez?), "A well-known man says" (like who?), "Everybody agrees" (name three!).
- Listen for lapses in logic. Keep your ears open for false analogies and half-truths. (Half a truth is NOT better than none. It is sometimes worse, because you are more likely to believe it.)
- Listen for loose statistics. That old numbers game is still—and always will be—a favorite trick of speech-makers. It's easy to toss handfuls of numbers at a benumbed audience. Numbers make an impression, and anyway, who's counting? Who's going to double-check?
- Ask yourself "Who says so?" When you're listening to a lecture or political speech or reading an article it pays to "consider the source." Whose side is the speaker on? Who pays his salary? Who is his sponsor?

How To Take Notes

Note-taking is so essential to many kinds of adult learning that you cannot afford to be haphazard about it. If you are in a technical course, if you are in a high-school or college credit program, if you are attending a lecture series or doing large amounts of reading, knowing how and when to take notes will be of great value to you.

Keep all your notes in one notebook

This may sound like an obvious bit of advice. However, look around you. You'll see students jotting notes on backs of envelopes, inside book covers, even on match folders. Notes of this disorganized kind are easy to lose, become faded and blurred from being carried about; and are almost impossible to assemble in an orderly

way when it's time to review for exams, prepare a speech, attend a meeting, or talk to the boss. Invest in a strong loose-leaf notebook, with plenty of room for additional pages. If you do find yourself in a spot where you must scribble notes on scraps of paper, transcribe them into your notebook as quickly as possible.

Make your notes short and to the point

Some students feel that note-taking means taking down whole paragraphs from books and speeches. Such a procedure is time-consuming and does not promote learning. The notes you make of speeches, teacher talks, and class discussions should be *condensations* of the original material . . . quick outlines . . . one or two word reminders . . . names of books and articles recommended by the speaker. If you try to transcribe long sentences word for word, you are soon left behind by the speaker. By the time you catch up again, his train of thought is lost to you.

Make your notes in ink

Write clearly. The best-organized notes are not much use if they're blurred and smudged, or if you can't decipher your own scribblings after a week or so.

Listen for clues to the speaker's important points. Many speakers telegraph important statements with phrases like "The point is . . .," or "Above all . . .," or "To sum it up. . . ." Experienced note-takers listen sharply for such tip-offs. Here are some other clues that tell note-takers to start writing:

The speaker raises his voice.

The speaker pauses dramatically, then makes a statement.

The speaker repeats a statement three or four times, in different words.

If the speaker uses a blackboard to emphasize his points, your job of note-taking is a cinch. He'll almost do it for you, in chalk.

Rewrite and organize your notes as soon as possible after the event

If you wait several days to look over the notes you made in class, you may be in for a shock. They may not make any sense to you at all! That's why you should look over your notes as soon after the class or lecture as possible. Write out in full any abbreviations you've used. (Even efficient note-takers have stared blankly at their own cryptic "do-it-yourself" shorthand notes after a week or two have gone by.) You can also add to your notes with other information you remember from the talk, but didn't have time to write down.

Look at the notes made by other students

There's nothing wrong with double-checking your notes against those made by other students. Let them see yours, too. You may find that they wrote down something important that you didn't hear or forgot to note. You'll be surprised to find how differently various individuals "hear" the very same speech.

Develop your own personal shorthand

Many speakers are hard to keep up with unless you have some short cuts to note-taking. Some of the obvious short cuts are such accepted signs as "&" for "and," "%" for "percent," "=" for "same as," "←" for "comes from," "→" for "leads to." You can easily think of some of your own; for example, use "incl." for "including," "w." for "with," "educ-l." for "educational," and other devices. It's a good idea to make a list of the most cryptic of these, and the words they stand for, in the back of your notebook. Use the same abbreviations all the time, or you'll find yourself wondering whether "w." means "with" or "when"!

Write your name, address, and phone number

Write clearly, in ink, on your notebook. Loss of a year's carefully taken notes can be a major tragedy.

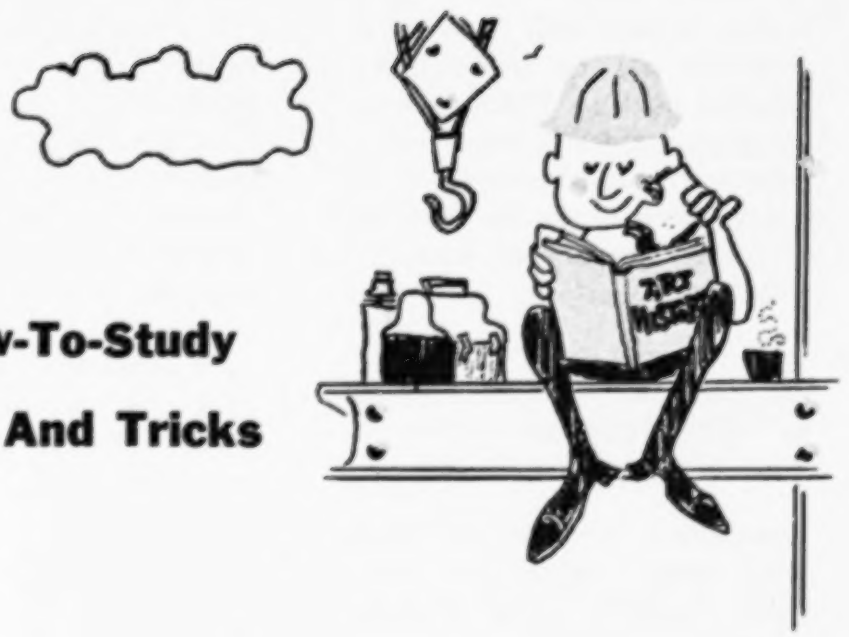
Use colored pencils as "visual aids" in your notebook

Underscore important points, use dots and arrows, run lines from one section of the page to another section that "ties in." Any device that will make your notes easier to read, remember, and understand is all to the good.

Put your notes to work for you

Read them over carefully before preparing a talk, writing a paper, or taking an exam. After reading each page or section, close your notebook and ask yourself questions about it. As a final check on your knowledge of the subject, write a three- or four-sentence "digest" of the contents of each page. *Warning:* Never throw away the notes you have made during an adult class, group discussion, or training session. They may be of practical service to you long after your course has ended. You may want to brush up on the subject some day. You may be asked to make an informal talk on the subject to coworkers, at a luncheon club, at a PTA or other civic meeting.

Chapter 5



How-To-Study Tips And Tricks

You CAN Concentrate: Here's How

Concentrating isn't easy. It's a real problem for many adult students. It is especially hard because adults have many job and home problems to set their thoughts wandering; and their home surroundings are rarely ideal for serious concentration.

Can you improve your ability to concentrate? You can, and you'll be happily surprised at how soon you can. Try some of the following techniques. Some are recommendations by high-school and college educators, adapted to the unique needs of adult students. Others are suggested by many adult educators to their own students. All have been used successfully by thousands of learners.

How To Concentrate: Twelve Tips

1. *Assemble beforehand all the tools and reading materials you'll need* during your study session. Ambling around the house looking for a sharp pencil or for the dictionary will only get you involved in conversations, in peeks at a TV show, or other distracting and time-consuming influences.
2. *Try to study in a room apart* from the rest of the family and their activities. Use a desk or set up a card table for your books and papers. The very fact that you go away from your family, into a separate room with the door closed, will get your mind ready for concentration and learning.

3. *Jerk your mind back in line the moment it wanders.* Don't give it time to get deeply involved in thoughts not on the subject. (Useful device: Place a check mark on a piece of paper every time your mind wanders. Trying to keep down the number of marks keeps your mind on your work.)

4. *Ask yourself questions* about the material you are studying to bring your mind back to your work and keep it there.

5. *Sometimes read aloud* from your study material to keep your thoughts from drifting away.

6. *Keep your thoughts on the track* by restating aloud, in your own words, what you have been reading.

7. *Try to train your family to respect your privacy*, your "study hour." (It does not boost concentration to have Billy toddle in and ask for a drink of water.) Phone interruptions don't help, either. Ask your husband or wife to take messages. You might make a "Do Not Disturb" sign and hang it on your door.

8. *Remember why you're studying this subject.* Your reasons for wanting to learn play a big part in your ability to concentrate. Surveys have revealed that many highly motivated students can concentrate though surrounded by chattering companions, blaring radios. So—sharpen that motivation! For example, if you're taking a math course to improve your job situation, make a mental picture of that fatter paycheck! Memorizing formulas won't be nearly so difficult with that pleasant goal dangling before your eyes. Or, if you're working to help pass a school-bond issue, make a mental picture of smaller classes and the end of double-shifts.

9. *Reward yourself for good behavior.* If you know that a tough part of the work is coming up, promise yourself a reward after it's finished. For example, you might concentrate for a half hour or an hour, then watch a good TV show or indulge in a snack. Knowing that a happy time of relaxation lies just around the bend, your mind will bear down on the work at hand.

10. *Don't try to concentrate if you are upset emotionally.* If you have had a spat with your wife or are concerned about a situation on your job, don't pick that evening to study. Research on the learning process has revealed that people learn least well when they are emotionally upset.

11. *Don't overdo it.* If you're not used to sitting for long periods of time, do your concentrating

in "short takes." Try 15 minutes of solid studying, without distraction, then leave your desk, stretch, walk out on the porch, drink a cup of coffee. You'll return to your work refreshed and ready for another 15-minute stint.

12. *Put it in writing.* Two of the most practical tools for building concentration are a pencil and paper. If you find yourself dozing over a difficult or dull paragraph or thinking of other things, bring yourself sternly into line by putting down on paper, in one sentence, what the paragraph is about. In this way, you'll force yourself to concentrate on the material that set your mind wandering.

Six Ways To Improve Your Memory

Some people say you don't have to remember facts, figures, statistics; you only need to know where to look them up. With the huge amount of facts available today, this theory is not far wrong.

However, in the practical world we live in, most of us have to use our memories daily. If you are a salesman, you must memorize many facts and figures about the product you sell. If you are a secretary, you can't look up your shorthand symbols every time you take dictation; you have to *remember* them, and they have to be right. As a tax-payer, you need to know the various local tax rates and how much you pay for key public services.

A good memory is needed, also, to get the most enjoyment out of art, music, foreign languages, literature. For example, the more you know and remember about various painters, about their different techniques and cultural backgrounds, the more pleasure you will gain from viewing their work.

There are tricks of memorization. Anyone can master them. Try these methods next time you have to commit anything to memory—mathematical formulas, a poem, or a list of names or dates:

1. *Before you start memorizing anything, read it over from beginning to end. Understand it.* Read the entire poem and know what it means before you start learning it word for word. Thoroughly understand that algebraic formula before memorizing it, and you will remember it for a longer period of time.

2. *Don't try to cram your memory.* Don't try to learn a page of material all in one sitting. For example, if you are trying to memorize a foreign-language vocabulary list or the Gettysburg Address, study it for about fifteen minutes, then stop for a breather and return to it later.

3. *Use initials as memory aids.* For example, if you are trying to memorize the names of the

first five presidents of the United States (Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe), turn their first initials into a silly sentence or question, like the following: "Will Annie Juggle Many Mushrooms?"

4. *Find the memory trick that fits your "type."* Some people find it easier to remember things they see, others can best remember things they hear. Through trial and error, find out which of the following ways works best for you: Reciting the material aloud . . . writing it down over and over again . . . or visualizing it in your mind's eye.

5. *Always "overlearn."* Once you have committed the dates or vocabulary list to memory, wait a day or so and study it once more. Research into the psychology of learning has shown that "overlearning" helps you remember the information longer.

6. *Put the information to use right away.* For example, if you are adding some new French words to your vocabulary, start using them in conversation as soon as possible. (Other students in the French class, as well as French-speaking friends and neighbors, will be glad to cooperate.) One of the most effective ways to remember *anything* is to use the information in your daily life as soon and as often as possible.

How To Learn From Textbooks

Some adult classes use textbooks. Some don't. If you are in a high-school completion program, you will study textbooks. Many technical and trade courses rely on books as well as on demonstrations and student projects.

If you are a slow reader . . . if you have a tough time concentrating on books for long periods of time . . . if you wonder whether you can keep up with the class . . . you need help!

One professor said, not long ago, that he could predict, with fair accuracy, which students would flunk out of college. Those who organize their time and know *how to study efficiently* almost always stay and graduate.

Ten Ways To Tackle A Textbook

- *First, read the entire assignment quickly.* Skim through the pages. Read the section headings. Read the first and last sentence of each paragraph, and the summary at the end of the chapter. By this time you have a good idea of the main theme of the chapter. You know what it's all about.

- *Reread the pages slowly, pencil in hand.* Read hard sentences over and over until you understand them. Then rewrite them in your own words. Underline with your pencil the important

"key" sentence in each paragraph (usually the opening sentence). Feel free to mark up your textbook if it belongs to you. Use colored pencil if you like.

- *Look up words you don't know.* If they are technical words you will have to remember—write them down on file cards, along with their meanings. You can review them later.
- *Ask yourself questions.* After you have read the assignment slowly and thoroughly, ask yourself questions about it and answer them out loud. Educators say this is the best way to dig out the heart of a subject and to remember it. *Experts say that, unless you recite in this way, you will probably forget 90 percent of what you have learned within two weeks!*
- *Put that pencil to work.* A pencil and scratch paper are your good right-hand men when you're studying a textbook. Jot down thoughts that occur to you—questions to ask in the classroom. Make notes of books on the same subject to look up later in the library. (Most textbooks have bibliographies at the end of each chapter.)
- *Don't neglect graphs and charts.* They were put in the books to make ideas clearer. One way to make a graph or table come alive for you is to redraw it yourself on a separate sheet of paper. Try to draw it as accurately as you can without looking at the book. You'll be working a psychological trick on yourself. The physical act of drawing will imprint the graph on your mind as nothing else can.
- *Figure out how you will use the information.* When you come to a dull paragraph, "trick" yourself into being interested. Ask yourself "How can this information help me? How can I put it to use?" Don't say, "I *must* learn this." Instead say, "I'm going to learn this because it's going to be of practical use to me." Can't see how that dull paragraph can possibly help you? Better talk to your teacher. He may say, "Skip that section." Or he may be able to point out a use you hadn't thought of.
- *Study the whole thing again tomorrow!* The following advice is given to Air Force officers who have returned to academic study: "Few experiences are so vivid that we learn them in one trial. Generally speaking, we must repeat any operation to make it our own. Material studied for an hour a day for four days, or even an hour a week for four weeks, will be remembered much better than material studied four hours one day and never reviewed."*

* *Studying to Learn.* Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

- *Use the study helps at the end of each chapter.* Most textbooks have review questions, self-tests, summaries, outlines at the end of each chapter. Don't skip over these; *use them.* You may also find a list of projects that will help you put your learning to use. Do at least one of these for each chapter.
- *Get help from your family.* You might as well get your husband or wife involved in this study session. Give them the textbook and tell them to ask you questions. They can turn each paragraph heading into a question . . . or they can use the questions at the end of the chapter.

How To Find Time To Study

"How am I going to find time to read up on first aid techniques?"
"When can I read *Macbeth*?"

How to find time to study! That's one of the biggest problems of adult learners. Most of them lead busy lives. Every minute of their day is full of important activities. At least, that's what adult students say. And they really believe it. But is it true?

Is there no time at all in your busy schedule for outside reading . . . for practicing the new language you're studying . . . for exam preparation?

Actually, you can *make* time in that busy day of yours. You make it out of scraps . . . odds and ends. You say you don't have any left-over seconds, minutes, or hours? Let's see for ourselves.

How about the many times a day that you *wait*—wait for your car pool or wait for a bus, wait in line at a lunch counter or restaurant, wait for your husband or wife at the store or train station, wait for shows to start, wait for that business appointment.

How about the many times a day that you *sit—and do nothing* sit in the bathtub (unless you're a shower type), sit through breakfast, sit in your car pool or sit in the bus, sit during coffee break time.

Getting the idea? Beginning to see that previous scraps of time are being wasted, dribbled away?

Here's how to put that time to work for you:

- *Carry tools of learning wherever you go,* such as small notebook and pencil; paperback book of outside reading in connection with the subject you are studying; textbook (if it's not too bulky); small foreign-language dictionary (if you're a language student); class notebook. If you're a man, a 9 x 12 manila envelope will hold all the materials you need. Or you can be sophisticated and use an attaché case. Or streamline your needs to bare essentials and keep them in your pocket. If you're a woman, invest in one of the fashionable large handbags.
- *Use flash cards.* Once you've made pocket-size flash cards

and used them, you'll wonder how you ever did without them. They're the busy learner's best friend. Simply use 3 x 5 index cards, available in dime or stationery stores. On them write ideas you want to ponder, vocabulary words, tax information, facts about the U.S. Constitution—whatever you are trying to learn. When you find yourself with a leftover scrap of time, slip a flash card out of your pocket and get to work. It's as easy as that. One adult learner used her 45-minute bus ride to work each day to develop quite a sizeable Spanish vocabulary. She used flash cards during these study-periods-on-wheels.

- *Get the paperback book habit.* When you are studying on the run, bulky books are for the birds. Luckily, you can find a portable paperback version of almost any book you need. Whether you are studying the classics or calculus, aesthetics, Zen Buddhism, or how to find your way through a gasoline engine, a paperback book exists to fill your needs. Most of them can be slipped into your pocket or purse.

Chapter 6

Steps to Faster Reading

You may be a slow reader and not know it. Your reading handicap may be keeping you from learning as well and as fast as other adult students.

How can you tell what your reading rate is?

Try this simple test:

Get a watch or clock with a second hand. When you're ready to start, write down the exact time, in minutes and seconds. Then read the introduction to this book. It contains about 400 words. Because it is written in a nontechnical style, the average college student could read it, with at least 75 percent comprehension, in one minute. Write down the exact time you stop reading. Then ask a fellow student or a member of your family to ask you the following questions about what you have read.

1. Name several kinds of adult learning groups.
2. How many adults are learning through public school programs?
3. Name one way in which military personnel are involved in adult education.
4. Research has been done recently in what branch of psychology?

If you took longer than a minute to read the page or if you had difficulty answering the questions about it, you do not read as efficiently as you could. You are seriously handicapped if you do a lot of reading in connection with your adult class or as part of your work.

Either your reading matter accumulates, and you never quite catch up, or you spend unnecessarily large amounts of time "keeping on top" of your reading chores.

Almost everyone can learn to read faster. Many individuals have doubled their speed, without losing their comprehension. In fact, faster reading usually results in better comprehension. Why? Because an important part of speeding your reading lies in developing your ability to figure out —fast—what the material is all about.

Here are 12 steps that are guaranteed to step up your reading rate. Start putting them in practice immediately, while you finish reading this book. Continue to use them from now on. You will not only learn faster—you will learn *more* from the material you read.

Speed reading courses are available in most large communities these days. They are offered in many public-school adult education programs. They may be the answer for you if you feel that you cannot solve your reading problem without help. However, if you have sufficient self-discipline to stick with it, the tips in this chapter can boost your reading speed without formal training.

Find out whether you pronounce each word as you read

- You may have learned to read by reading out loud during your early school days. Do you know that you may still be "reading out loud"—but silently? If you are, your reading is done at a snail's pace. Here's how to find out. Put your fingers on your lips while you read these words. Do your lips move? Hold your fingers on your throat while you read. Do you feel vibrations? If so, you are pronouncing each word, silently—a real "slow-down" operation!

Practice reading words in groups of two or three

- Force yourself to "gulp" your words, by moving a sheet of paper down the page, covering each line after you have read it. Move the paper fast enough to keep yourself reading more rapidly than you ordinarily would. At first you may have the uncomfortable feeling that someone is treading on your heels, but you'll soon be forced to stop reading each word individually!

Concentrate on the first sentence of each paragraph

- This practice will help you to read for the *main idea* of the paragraph. Once you've established in your mind what the paragraph is all about, you'll read and absorb the follow-up sentences with greater speed and comprehension. In 85 percent of straight factual reading material, the first sentence of each paragraph is the "topic sentence."

Skim over, or ignore completely, words like *a, the, of, for, etc.*

- Read sentences as if they were telegrams, and watch your reading speed zoom! For example, in the point above, you should read the first sentence like this: "Concentrate first sentence each paragraph." Let prepositions and conjunctions fall where they may!

Don't reread until you have to

- The first time you read a paragraph or page of material, read it through, don't let your eyes back-track. Keep going, though solely tempted to reread an obscure sentence. If, when you've finished, the sentence has not become clear to you, go back. Reread it. This helps break the bad habit of constant rereading and helps form the good habit of absorbing meanings at first reading.

Run a "reading race" with yourself

- Use a watch with a second hand. Write down the time you start reading a page, then read as fast as you can. Write down your finish time. Ask yourself questions about the page and then check your comprehension. Perform this exercise once a day (reading different pages each time, of course). Each day, note how much your speed has improved. Gulp your words, don't sip and savor them. Remember—*you're in a hurry.* After a week or two of this hard reading exercise, you'll find you've made spectacular gains in reading speed and efficiency.

Remember that you cannot read heavy material and light material at the same speed

- Don't be disturbed if you slow down to a walk when reading books on science, mathematics, or philosophy. An able reader, capable of skimming at 6000 words a minute through average reading material, may plod along at 50 words a minute when studying chemistry, for example.

Look up unknown words, but do it *later*

- Don't let anything slow down the swift rhythm of your reading—not even new and unknown words. Quickly underscore unknown words, to be looked up later. You may learn their meaning from context—from what the rest of the sentence means. If not, wait till you reach the end of the paragraph or page before opening your dictionary. Systematic improvement of your vocabulary is essential if you would speed up your reading. Keep a notebook of new words and their definitions. Study and use them frequently.

Know the three ways of reading

- Before you read a book—any book—know *why* you are reading it. You must know your purpose, then you can decide

how to read. If you're tracking down an answer to a question that came up in class, you *skim*. That means you read chapter heads, paragraph heads, summaries, let your eyes run swiftly down pages looking for key words. You have no intention of reading every word in the book. If you are studying a textbook, skim first, read carefully afterwards. If you are studying heavy technical material, read slowly, word after word, making sure you understand every sentence thoroughly. If you're reading fiction, do as you like. Skim swiftly to keep up with a fast-moving plot. Or saunter along, savoring the writer's style and use of language.

Do faster reading exercises daily

- There's not much point in using fast reading techniques from time to time, sporadically, because they won't be permanently effective that way. In order to make faster reading part of your life, you must have daily practice sessions. Select a time of the day or evening that is usually free. Start out with light article reading and work up gradually to more difficult material. Read for a half hour, as fast as you can, checking yourself for comprehension. Make this part of your daily routine, and you are absolutely certain to become a faster, more efficient reader—and stay that way. Practice these techniques while you do your regular reading throughout the day, of course. Your evening session will be concentrated exercise periods—calisthentics to to strengthen good reading habits.

Approach everything you read with a specific purpose in mind

- "To say or think as you open the book, 'Well, I wonder how many fool remarks this idiot will foist on me' is more useful than to say or think nothing," said Walter Pitkin. Before you start reading, write down your purpose, whether it is to look for the key sentence in every paragraph, to understand the position of the writer on a controversial issue, or to figure out whether the butler killed the duchess' brother. Through purposeful reading you'll get the habit of reading *actively*, with all your mind, rather than *passively*.

Do this helpful reading exercise:

- Quickly find the subject and verb and object of every sentence—who did what to whom. The newspaper is an excellent practice ground. Pick out the vital words without which there'd be no sentence and underline them.

Tips On Reading Technical Material

- *Be prepared to slow down* to a crawl, reading the tightly written pages word for word. Soci-

ology, education, physics, and mathematics are slow going for the most efficient reader.

- *Read definitions carefully,* figure out what they mean, then rewrite the definition in your own words. Underline key words and phrases of definitions.
- *Break down scientific experiments into steps.* Number each step. Then close the book and write the steps of the experiment in your own words.
- *Read technical matter creatively.* What does the information mean? What effects does it have? For example, read a paragraph on the gradual reduction of the underground water table and then ask yourself how this affects crops and wildlife, the life of the farmer himself, the life of an apartment dweller, and economic conditions in the area. This kind of reading demands a lot of you; it is not easy, but it is tremendously satisfying. It helps you to understand, to remember, and to think for yourself.
- *Turn paragraph headings into questions* before you start to read. This device is surprisingly effective in propelling you through difficult material. For example, in a book on the psychology of learning a paragraph headed "Sheffield's Prepotent-Response Interpretation" should be reworded by the student in this way: "What is Sheffield's Prepotent-Response Interpretation?" His first purpose in reading the paragraph should be to track down a short, concise answer to that question. He should underline the answer, then write it down in his own words.
- *Look up and write down words you don't understand.* This is very important when you're studying material in which technical terms and symbols are used. In mathematics, for example, you'll come upon words and symbols whose meaning you must know and remember. Write them and their meanings down on file cards, or in your notebook, to be committed to memory later.
- *Restate math problems in other ways,* in your own words. For example, say to yourself. "I have rate and distance. I need to find time."
- *Do "outside reading" in your technical subject.* Look in the public library for books, pamphlets, magazine articles on the subject you're studying. To be sure a book will serve your purpose, read its table of contents, skim through it to see if vocabulary and approach are too simple or too advanced. To be sure its information is not "dated," look on the flyleaf to see when it was published. This is especially important in such rapidly changing fields as television, atomic energy, and space technology. Your most

up-to-date information on subjects like these will be found in technical and trade magazines. Reading other books and articles on the same subject, can be of great help to you if you're having a tough time understanding a particular point. When you read other explanations of it, in different words, it may all come clear to you.

How Good/Poor Are Your Reading Habits?

A Self-Test

1. Do you sometimes glance back at lines you've already read, for a word or phrase you've missed, or because you've forgotten some details?
2. Do you have to read every word of an entire article to find out the main point the writer is trying to make?
3. Do you stop to look up a new word the moment you encounter it?
4. Do you move your lips or pronounce each word with tongue or throat as you read?
5. Do you read fiction, popular articles, and textbooks in the same way and at the same rate of speed?
6. Do you conscientiously read every single word, giving "equal time" to the little connecting words such as *a, or, and, an, with, by*?
7. Do you have difficulty remembering what you read? Does it go "in one ear and out the other?"
8. While your eyes are moving over the words are you thinking of other things?

If you answered "yes" to more than three of the questions, you have poor reading habits that are undoubtedly slowing down your learning. You can improve your reading speed in a matter of weeks if you start now to do the exercises listed in this chapter.

NOTE: Many of the suggestions in Chapter 5 will also help you to improve your rate of reading and comprehension.

Chapter 7

If You'll Be Taking Exams— Here's How

If you are in an adult trade or other technical course, studying for a civil service appointment, or completing your high-school or college education, you will face examinations sooner or later.

Exam-taking is a great help to learning. When you prepare for exams you are actually "over-learning"—studying a subject more than once (an important aid to memory). Even if you fail, you can learn by studying your exam paper and discovering where your weakness lies.

Did you know that there is a right and a wrong way to take examinations?

You can raise your final score by many points simply by knowing what to do and what not to do when taking an exam!

You may also fail your examination—even though you know the subject matter well—simply because you do not know the techniques of efficient exam-taking.

What are these techniques? Are they easy to master? Actually, they are simple enough. You merely have to know what they are, *and you have to use them.* That is why you'd be wise to take this booklet into the examination room with you so you can refer to these tips while taking your exam. If you are not allowed to take such materials in with you, take along a list of the most important techniques. Ask the teacher to look at the list at the door so he'll know it's not a "crib" sheet.

How To Prepare For Exams: EIGHT GUIDES TO HIGHER GRADES

Don't Cram

- "Cramming is very much like packing your bag in five minutes just before you catch a train for a long trip," said Joseph C. Heston of Fresno State College, California. This author pointed out that when you cram you stuff your mind hurriedly and haphazardly, putting in items you don't need, leaving out essentials, and ending up with a disorganized mess. Don't let yourself get in a spot that makes cramming the only way out.

Do Review Systematically

- About a week before the exam, add a period of review time to your regular study period. Use this time to reread the notes you have made and to ask yourself questions about them. Skim through your textbook, turning paragraph headings into questions, then answer the questions without referring to the text.

Study Technical Vocabulary

- Almost every exam includes definitions, stated in one form or another. If you took the advice on page 32 and made a list of technical terms and their definitions as you encountered them, you are way ahead of the game. Study that list until you know the terms as well as you know your own name. Be sure that you understand what they mean. You may be asked to rewrite the definition in your own words.

Study Formulas, Laws, Ideas

- If you made flash cards of the most important formulas, ideas, and laws for study in your spare time, you'll find them of great value now. If you did not, try the following method: Skim through your textbook, underlining in red pencil every concept, formula, law, or rule of importance. Then spend some time studying them—their meaning as well as their exact wording.

Learn From Your Past Mistakes

- Look over papers you have handed in and exams you have taken in the past. What *kinds* of mistakes did you make most frequently? Were you weakest in answering definition questions or essay-type questions? Did you make careless errors that reduced your score, even though you knew the material well? You can learn a lot about yourself and your exam-taking strengths and weaknesses by looking over your past work.

Find Out What *Kind* Of Test It Will Be

- Ask your teacher whether the test will consist mostly of true or false questions, or if it will bear down heavily on essay-type questions. Will it include multiple-choice questions, in

which you select from a list of possible answers? The more you know about the *kinds* of questions you'll be getting, the more efficiently you can prepare for the exam.

Study With Other Class Members

- Some of your review periods should be group sessions with other class members. During these times you can ask each other questions, test each others' knowledge of vocabulary, ideas, theories, formulas, rules, etc.

Analyze Your Teacher

- A famous school for contestants tells its students the *kinds* of answers different contest judges like and advises students to write their entries accordingly. You'd be wise to analyze your particular teacher's likes and dislikes in the same way before taking that exam. For example, some teachers like analytical or philosophical answers about a literary or historical personage, rather than a mere narration of dates and events. Other teachers prefer fact-packed answers, full of dates, times, and places. Many teachers like to hear the reasons behind a fact, theory, or philosophy. Others are satisfied if you merely report the information correctly. Others want both. Do a little teacher-analysis before taking your next exam. What kinds of papers does he grade highest? What aspects of the subject does he stress in class sessions?

The Right Way To Write Exams

There's a right and wrong way to do almost everything—even taking examinations. The following tips, if used, are *guaranteed* to steer you through your next exam with greater chance of success and more actual learning.

Read the entire examination before writing a word

- Don't get panicky because others start writing immediately. You will be way ahead of them in the long pull because you'll take your exam in an orderly, organized way. As you read the exam questions, look for the following information: Do some questions bring higher scores than others? Are there some questions you *must* answer, according to the exam instructions? Do some questions look easy to you? Some difficult?

Pay special attention to how the exam is scored

- In many examinations, some questions count more toward your final mark than others do. *It will pay you to know which questions count most.* Then concentrate on the high-counting questions. Figure out how much of your exam-time should logically be devoted to them.

Another tip: In some tests, you don't have to answer every question in order to score 100. Some questions can be omitted. (If your exam does not tell how your paper will be scored, ask your teacher to tell you before the exam begins.)

First answer the questions you're sure of

- After you have figured out which questions are the high counters, answer the easiest of these first. This enables you to latch onto all the points you can, right away. It also has another benefit: While you are writing the answers to the "easy" questions, answers to the more difficult questions may occur to you. For example, in a world history course, while you are listing the points of the Versailles Treaty as requested in easy Question II, you'll see some of the seeds of the depression of the thirties, about which you'll be writing in tough Question IV.

Read instructions carefully

- For example, a student who reads instructions quickly and superficially may not notice that he need answer only three out of four questions in Section III. He answers all four, thus wasting 15 minutes that he needs desperately to finish another section.

Remember "around" facts you've forgotten

- This is tried and true "bait" for fishing things out of your memory. If you can't think of the name of the general who surrendered to Washington at Yorktown . . . let your mind wander around the event. Who were some other British generals? Picture in your mind the page of your textbook that tells about it. Was there a picture of the surrender? What immediate events led up to the surrender? Chances are the name "Cornwallis" will pop into your mind as if by magic. If this doesn't work go on to another question in the exam. The fact you are seeking may swim up out of your subconscious while you're thinking about something else.

Guess the answer . . . but only when the odds are in your favor

- There are times when it pays to guess answers you're not sure of. For example, if you have to answer 50 true-false questions and know the answers to 30, you can safely guess the answers of the remaining 20—*if* you are being graded on the number you get right. The odds are that you'll get 10 out of the 20 correct. Psychologists say you'll get even more than that right, because you've studied the material and presumably knew the answers at one time. However, if the exam will be graded by subtracting the wrong answers from the right ones, you should not guess. If in doubt about

grading procedure on a question of this kind, ask the teacher.

Make an outline for essay-type answers

- You'll notice that some students plunge immediately into essay-type answers, scribbling away for dear life and covering page after page of paper. Their energy and word output will not earn them a good score, however, if the ideas they express are disjointed and poorly organized. You'll do better if you devote a few minutes to thought, organize your ideas on the subject, and decide what single message or angle you want to get across to the reader. Write down that single thought as the topic sentence, the "theme" of your answer. Then write beneath it the points you will bring out to support this theme or idea. The amount of time you spend in outlining your essay-type answers will pay off well for you. However, it is easy to go overboard in outlining. Here are some pitfalls to avoid:

  Don't make your outline too elaborate. Simply jot down key thoughts, using abbreviations. Watch the clock when you outline. Don't devote time to outlining while running out of time for actual writing.

Don't "pad" essay-type answers

- If you can't think of much to say on the subject, you may be tempted to "pad"—add extra words that don't really say much but make your answer look longer. Don't do it. The teacher won't be fooled. If you feel your answer is too short, try to think of specific examples that will make your points stronger. In writing about literature of the past, for example, you might point out similar plots or approaches used by modern writers, which will show the teacher you understand meanings and underlying principles of the books you are discussing.

Break your essay answer into readable sections with subheads

- Once you've made an outline, it will be easy to use some of its points as subheads. In this way you break up heavy chunks of writing into short "takes" that are easy for the teacher to skim through and grade. He'll realize immediately that you've organized your thinking on the subject and he'll grade you accordingly.

Double-check before you start writing

- A student was asked to write a short essay about a large saltwater fish. He spent 10 minutes outlining and writing some excellent paragraphs on the whale, but the mark he received for the question was zero. The whale, he realized to his consternation when he got the exam paper back, is a mam-

mal, not a fish. Before plunging into writing, double-check your thoughts very carefully against the question.

What To Do After It's Done

When you've answered the last question to your satisfaction, DON'T HAND YOUR PAPER IN. One of the most important parts of test-taking lies ahead. Without it, you may lose many valuable points unnecessarily.

What is this important wind-up operation?

It's simply this:

Read the exam from beginning to end, carefully, for possible errors

The errors you can make in an exam may be mere "slips of the pen"—putting an X in the wrong square, writing 1006 for 1066, leaving out a letter in a word, intending to mark Choice B and marking Choice D by mistake. The teacher, however, has no way of knowing that your mistake was not lack of knowledge but a "slip." And down go your grades!

It's easy, too (especially if you're in a hurry) to make simple mistakes in adding or subtracting. This can give you a very wrong answer, even though the formula you used, or your approach to the word problem, was absolutely correct.

Misreading directions is another error made all too frequently in exam-taking. You cannot be too careful, too meticulous, in figuring out the exact meaning of every question (teachers sometimes make the meanings tricky, on purpose!). For example: A student was asked to list the five largest cities west of the Mississippi. Reading the question hurriedly, and happy because she thought she knew the answer, she listed the five largest states west of the Mississippi. By rereading the question carefully when her exam was written, and checking the answer against it, she corrected her error before it was too late.

Chapter 8

How To Use Your Community Resources— To Learn More

No matter what you are learning—civil defense techniques, blueprint reading, parent-child relationships, ways to protect your retirement income—your community has resources that will help you learn more—faster.

Your learnings should not be limited to class discussion and assigned reading materials. It can and should branch out in many directions. It can be nourished by your local public libraries, local and state government agencies, clubs and organizations, labor unions, art and natural history museums, local radio and television programs, local business and industry.

How can you learn from these sources? As a starter let's take a look at—

What You May Not Know About Libraries

Many people still look on libraries as warehouses of books and nothing more. They don't realize that libraries have changed.

Did you know that you can perhaps go to your local library if—

you want to find a film on world affairs?

you want to take out a foreign-language record?

you want the names and party affiliations of your state legislature?

you want to hear a Shakespearian play with top English actors?

you need a map of outer space?

you need a back issue of a technical magazine?
you want to see a particular government publication?
you want the voting record of your congressman?

Not all libraries offer all these services, of course. The library in your community may be the one-room kind, or you may live in an area served by a bookmobile. But there is almost sure to be a town or city within driving distance that *does* boast a big, modern library with a variety of learning resources and with interlibrary loan service.

If you are in an adult group studying some aspect of science or technology, you may find the help you need in the more specialized libraries in your community. Many businesses have technical libraries in which you will find books and publications your public library may not receive.

You may discover, if you live in a city, that there are fine law and medical libraries that open their doors to researchers and students. If you have a college or university in your area, you'll find its library an excellent source of materials dealing with the subjects in which it specializes. An agricultural college, for example, usually keeps on its library shelves timely and fascinating reading matter—books, magazines, pamphlets, government publications—for students of vocational agriculture. Some of these specialized libraries only loan books to their own students. Outsiders must do their research in the library reading rooms.

Here are some practical tips on—

How To Use a Library

- Make yourself familiar with your local library.
  Whether it's for a class assignment or for the sheer joy of finding out more about a favorite subject, the library should be a friendly and familiar place to you. You should know how to look up books, where to find biographical information, how many years back their magazine files go, what their record and film library consists of, and the like.

- Know where to find statistical information.
  Every library has the two most common collections of information about matters of general interest. They are *The World Almanac* and the *Statistical Abstract of the United States.* Facts on everything from pig-iron production to art museums may be found there. More complete information on specific topics can be found in the library's encyclopedia sets.

- Know how to track down biographical material.
  For data on important people, the library can't be topped. Just tell the librarian what person you want information about, and she'll guide you to

the right reference book. Some of these references are *Dictionary of American Biography* (for famous Americans who are no longer living), *Dictionary of National Biography* (for important Englishmen), *Current Biography* (a regular publication about persons currently in the news), and the whole line of *Who's Who.*

- Know how to find magazine articles—fast.

  If you want to know which magazines have published articles about what makes a better school, for example, where would you begin? You should start with the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature,* then try the *International Index: A Quarterly Guide to Periodical Literature.* The *Education Index* would be helpful, too. It lists articles that have been published on all aspects of education. Once you have found an article that seems to have the information you seek, ask the librarian if she has that particular issue in her back files.

- Don't forget the vertical file.

  Every library has a "vertical file," in which are kept pamphlets, booklets, and brochures that the library receives on a tremendous variety of topics. Still looking for information on better schools? Look under *s* in the vertical file, and you may find a booklet published by a board of education, a school of education, or a teaching association.

- Don't be afraid to ask the librarian.

  The librarian, a professionally trained educator, is there to serve you—to answer your questions, to help you look up quotes, statistics, or a particular essay or publication. If your library belongs to a cooperative system, or is part of an interlibrary loan network, your librarian will order for you books or publications he does not have.

  If you are a new American just learning the language—or if you are a slow reader—he will help you find interesting books that are suitable for your level of reading ability. If you are doing research on a science topic or on local history, he will guide you to every source of information on your chosen subject. Librarians are skilled in helping people solve research problems—tracking down a piece of information, a little-known quote, a hard-to-find magazine, or a special book.

- Make use of your public-school library.

  If you are in a public-school adult education class, explore the facilities of the school library. Ask if it is available to adult students. Many school libraries have books and publications that are useful to adults as well as to day students.

Museums Offer More Than Ever Before

If you haven't visited an art, scientific, historical, or natural history museum in recent years, prepare for a happy surprise. Museums are no longer musty storehouses. They now make lively contributions to community life and learning.

You may discover that your local museum offers:

- Lectures on art, music, science, public affairs
- Film showings of unique interest
- Concerts, choral groups, folk music events
- Adult discussion groups
- Museum tours with electronic "guides" (visitors hear discussions of specific displays through earphones)
- Inexpensive museum copies available for sale.

Local Business And Industry Can Help You Learn

If you are in a technical or vocational course, here's how to learn even more about your field of interest: Find out which local businesses and industries do the kind of work you are preparing for. If you are learning drafting, for example, visit the offices of local architects or mechanical engineers. They may have new books or technical manuals you can borrow. You may be able to watch their draftsmen at work . . . and ask their personnel people about employment opportunities for draftsmen in your community.

Many industries welcome tours of their factories and facilities by the public. You'll find this kind of "on-the-job" research a helpful addition to the textbook learning you may be doing in your adult class.

If you know of, or hear about, a local individual who is an expert in the subject you are studying, ask your adult education teacher to invite him to speak to your class. Or contact the public relations department of your largest local industries and the business agents of local unions. Some of them make a practice of supplying speakers on various subjects for groups in their community.

More Sources of Learning in Your Town

- If you want to become a more responsible citizen, watch American government at work in your own community. Attend meetings of your town council . . . of the local school board. Visit municipal buildings . . . go to the county seat and attend court trials. Such activities will bring your textbook studies and your newspaper reading of government to life. The Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Town Charter will be more than words to you. In order for any American, new or native-born, to be a responsible citizen, he should know "at first hand" how his government works.

- Local chapters of national associations can be a big help to you. If you are in a parent discussion group on homework or curriculum, you'll find your local teachers association a good source of information. They'll acquaint you with pamphlets, leaflets, brochures, on these subjects published by the National Education Association. Local units of the American Legion, Boy Scouts, American Red Cross, unions, Chamber of Commerce, National Congress of Parents and Teachers, all are sources of learning for you, depending on the subject you are exploring.

- Contact your state government for local historical data and biographical material . . . for statistics about your state's agricultural output, new industries, manpower shortage, etc. *You may find that your state* government can supply you with information folders and booklets on a variety of subjects from soil conservation to highway safety.

- If you are learning a foreign language—Spanish, for example—find out if your town has a Spanish-speaking section. If it does, rejoice. You can learn a lot by visiting Spanish restaurants and grocery stores, by reading Spanish newspapers and magazines available on local newsstands, and by buying Spanish records and using your newly acquired Spanish to talk to tradespeople.

- Involve yourself in a little theater group in your town (if it has one) if you are studying drama, speech, creative writing, art, or music. They may be able to put you to work.

- Join a club or become active in a political party to keep your learning alive. To enrich your learning and to keep it alive long after your adult classes have ended, join a local group of persons with the same interests. You may find that your town has a writers club, a stamp-collectors club, an astronomy club, a bird-watchers club, a literary club, a political activities club, a homemakers club, etc. It is sure to have precinct organizations for the major political parties.

- Explore the learning resources of your local government; for example, your health department may have pamphlets on health and safety.

- Turn radio and television into learning tools. You can add to your learning on many subjects by radio listening and television viewing right in your own home. Each week, sit down with your local program listings. Take a red pencil and place a large star beside each program that will help you in your particular adult learning group.

Chapter 9

If You're Taking A TV Course

Millions of American adults are learning new ideas and new skills by taking educational TV courses in their own homes.

Are you one of them? If so, you're to be congratulated. The typical viewer of educational television reads more books and serious magazines than the non-ETV viewer . . . is active in public affairs . . . belongs to a civic organization for community betterment . . . attends the opera and symphony concerts . . . has some college education . . . is one of the leaders in his community.*

As one of these TV learners, you've probably discovered that it's a completely new and different kind of "school" you're attending. You've discovered that, as a TV student, you have unique problems. For instance, you've probably asked yourself—

Should I take notes and maybe miss seeing the next step of the demonstration?

How can I ask a question?

What can I do when the teacher goes too fast for me?

Should I watch the TV lesson alone, or would I learn more by watching with others?

Although television is a newcomer to the education world, research has already been done on the TV learner and how he learns. It is being done by individual TV teachers, by educational television stations, by universities, by experts in the field of audiovisual communication.

* Schramm, Wilbur, editor. *The Impact of Educational Television.* Based on studies made in ETV cities. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1960.

This research has shown that you're more likely to learn successfully by TV if you do the following things:

Do not make notes during the program

- Don't make notes unless the instruction is moving along slowly enough to make note-taking practical. When you are concentrating on note-taking, you may miss a step of the demonstration or some other important part of the visual lesson.

Do repeat words or formulas after the teacher

- Many TV courses are in reality "audience participation shows," and rightly so. Research has found that, under most conditions, when the audience takes an active part in the TV lesson, learning is boosted. So when your TV teacher says, "Repeat out loud after me," do exactly that. At first it will seem odd, talking out loud as you sit all alone by your TV set, but you'll soon get used to it.

Try some "mental practice"

- Mental practice is the technique of "thinking the answers" or performing a drill or demonstration in your mind. If you are learning how to make a ceramic bowl by the "coil" system, for example, go over the steps of the process, one by one, in your mind several times after the television lesson is over.

***Do* perform those TV projects**

- When your TV teacher suggests activities or projects for you to work on between your TV lessons, don't neglect them. The teacher has an excellent reason for making such suggestions: it is his way of making sure that you *remember* what you are learning via television. He knows that the sooner you *use* your new learning, the more likely it is to become a part of your life.

Organize a TV "study group"

- Help yourself put your new learning to practical use by studying with others instead of alone. If the group cannot actually watch the TV lesson together, it can get together for discussion . . . for conversation (if you are learning a new language) . . . for trying out newly acquired skills. Your new learning may languish and die if you don't find friends with whom to practice it.

Use TV textbooks and study guides

- You'll get much more out of your TV class if you send for all the learning materials suggested by the teacher. Even if you are not working for credits, your TV lesson time will be much more productive if you use the materials that have been especially prepared to help you learn by this new medium.

Keep that motivation strong

- If you don't have a strong, lively purpose for taking that television course, you may lose interest for several reasons: because many TV classes are scheduled in the small hours of the morning and it's a great temptation to turn over and go back to sleep or because you don't receive the usual "rewards" of regular classroom attendance (asking and answering questions, lively discussion with class members, socializing after class, etc.). So —if you feel your interest weakening, remember *why* you decided to take this course in the first place. Recall vividly to your mind the future satisfactions you expect to get from it . . . chance for a better job because you can type . . . ability to speak French when you make that trip to Europe . . . greater enjoyment and understanding of the world's great writers . . . a new understanding about government.

Wait and see if your question is answered

- Naturally you can't just speak up and ask a question when you're learning by television. If a question comes to your mind, you may find that the teacher has anticipated it. The answer to your question may come later in the program, or even in your next TV lesson. If it does not, drop the teacher a postcard. If he receives several cards bringing up the same point, your question will doubtless be answered on TV soon.

Don't hesitate to communicate with your TV teacher

- If the teacher is going along at too fast a pace . . . if he turns his back to the audience and you have difficulty seeing what he is doing at times . . . either call or write the station with your suggestions for change and improvement.

Chapter 10

How To Continue Learning Every Day Of Your Life

You have now been introduced to the techniques of learning as part of an adult group—in a formal class, a discussion group, in informal training sessions in your work, etc.

This chapter will show that your learning need not and should not stop when that class ends. You can learn and improve yourself every day of your life. Learning keeps you young, lively, interesting. You'll find so many fascinating things to do, things you'll want to try, that you won't know what to do first. Learning keeps you from stagnating—from growing old before your time.

And who knows what it may lead to? A woman in a New York suburb, when a local election came around in which she truly didn't have an opinion, decided to learn all she could about the various candidates. She read and clipped all the newspaper articles on the subject she could lay her hands on. She listened to the candidates on radio and television, jotting down the gist of their talks. She attended community rallies and teas so she could talk to the candidates in person and size them up.

First thing you know, she became an ardent enthusiast for a particular candidate. She pitched in and helped address and mail flyers about him. She made phone calls, urging people to vote for him. She gave an election night party for the partisans she had been working with. From then on, she was in the thick of local politics, loving every minute of it—and eventually ran for office herself.

Another individual, after her adult classes in conversational French ended, continued to read French books and listen to French records. She played French card games with her family. She decided to write an article about the different methods she used to learn French at home. The article sold so promptly that she thought there might be a market for a book on methods of learning at home. She wrote one, and *it* sold. All because she refused to stop learning French when her French class ended!

What can *you* do at home, as part of your daily life, to continue learning? Here are some ideas:

Put TV And Radio To Work For You

If you are a TV fan (a recent survey shows that adults now watch television more hours per week than children do), don't just be a viewer—be a *doer*. For example:

- When you enjoy a classic on TV, make a point of reading it in the original and of reading other books by the same author.
- Invite friends to watch outstanding programs on education, international affairs, local community problems. After the program, discuss the problems among yourselves. Look for solutions. Figure out what you, as interested citizens, can do to help solve the problem.
- Encourage family discussion groups after an important TV show. Encourage questions. Start the ball rolling with some provocative questions and statements of your own: Did you believe everything the main speaker said? Why do you think he feels this way? I think he's all wrong—do you agree with me? Group discussion of this kind is used by teachers after classroom television shows to help the youngsters learn more from what they have seen and heard. After a session like this, you'll learn more, too.
- Watch election-time programs closely. Send for materials offered—information pamphlets, charts to help you keep score on election nights, reprints of speeches, and the like. In this way you will learn how to vote wisely.
- Remind yourself about fine programs scheduled during the week by taking a red pencil and starring them in your weekly program booklet. Do this, and you'll be less likely to miss outstanding plays, local and national public affairs programs, panel discussions, science shows. Some "good music" stations publish monthly schedules listing all selections. Take them up on their offer of a trial subscription.
- Make your TV set a "center of learning." Place near it a

table on which there is an atlas, dictionary, and almanac for use during news and other public affairs programs. Hang a large world map on the wall above or near your set. You'll find yourself referring to it constantly to find the exact location of a place currently in the news—a new African nation, a trouble spot in middle Europe, a flooding river. On your "learning table" keep a pad and pencil for writing down names of books to read, records to buy, pamphlets or speeches to send for, instructions on how to make crafts or home decorations, unusual recipes, new ideas to explore with friends and colleagues.

- Let TV programs inspire you to go out and see things. TV court trials are popular. You've probably seen many of them. But have you ever visited a real courtroom in your community, ever watched a real trial? Television should be your introduction to new and fascinating real-life exeriences . . . visits to natural history museums, science laboratories, exhibitions, school board meetings, city council meetings, etc.
- Try out art and craft projects seen on television. You'll multiply the pleasure you received from the program. Do a water color *yourself*, even though you've never done such a thing before. Experiment with clay or linoleum blocks. Doing it is more fun than viewing it, and you learn a lot more about art by actual participation.
- Take advantage of TV education classes that are aired in your town. Some communities offer typing, shorthand, art and music appreciation, and American history. And, of course, some cities have fine educational television stations that offer a wide range of home study programs on a regular basis, even at prime viewing time.
- Don't forget the learning that comes to you via radio these days. Symphony concerts, jazz concerts, soloists, news and public affairs programs, talks on serious subjects—all are available to those who seek them. A recent and popular type of radio program is that in which an expert is interviewed then questioned by the listening audience via telephone. This gives you a good opportunity to find out what you want to know, from top persons in different fields.

One of the best ways to continue learning is by reading. Do you know how and what to read in order to learn? Here are some tips:

Make up your mind to read at least one book of nonfiction a month. It could be in the field of science, biography, current history, philosophy—whatever you like. Such a reading schedule

would soon pay rich dividends. You'd be amazed at the ways in which this kind of reading would enter into your daily life and enrich it. Paperbacks are a good choice. They can be carried with you and dipped into at odd times.

Read your newspaper with an eye to learning. Read the editorial page and the political columnists with care. You don't have to agree with them, but you will learn from them. If you violently disagree, the "Letters to the Editor" section is a good place to "talk back." Assemble your thoughts on the subject, write them down, and send them to the editor. The act of writing will help you clarify your thinking on the subject.

Read at least one news magazine and one magazine of commentary. You can't get it all from your newspaper. For a broader and deeper look at the news, subscribe to a news magazine and to a magazine of social commentary.

Send for reading matter published by associations; organizations; and the local, state, or national government. A wealth of information on literally millions of topics lies at the tip of your pen—in booklets, pamphlets, handbooks, and folders either free or low cost. Ask the Government Printing Office (Washington 25, D.C.) to mail you their regular listings of new publications. Ask your local library to tell you good sources of information on specific topics. Many magazines list new and useful low-cost pamphlets for their readers, along with information on where to send for them.

Don't forget that you can learn by ear, too, if you listen to the right things. The world of listening is wide and wonderful. Here are some approaches to it . . . in your own home or your own community:

Listen to educational records

- You can hear records of Shakespearian plays by top actors . . . plays in foreign languages . . . foreign-language instruction . . . and a fascinating variety of recordings devoted to many aspects of American history: examples of great American oratory, interviews with top personalities of our time, recordings of the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address, the Bill of Rights, etc. . . . and the "I Can Hear It Now" series, which covers the period from 1919 to 1949. You may be able to borrow some of these records from your public library. For information on where to order them, if they're not available locally, visit your local record shop.

Listen to topnotch speakers

- If you live in or near a town that is on the "lecture circuit," attend these events whenever you can to hear outstanding Americans speak about current events, literature, science. Also, listen to local speakers: political figures, churchmen, educators, businessmen, scientists.

Civic organizations frequently ask local authorities to speak, and the public is often invited.

Change the pictures on your walls

- Inexpensive prints and reproductions of fine art are becoming increasingly easy to secure. Also, many libraries have framed works of art you may borrow.

Listen to neighborhood experts

- You may be surprised to find how many "experts" live near you: The man down the street with the beautiful garden deserves your full attention when he talks about crab grass or rose bushes; the young mother who makes beautiful clothes for her children is an excellent source of advice on your dressmaking problems. It pays to listen when these authorities drop words of wisdom about their particular specialty.

The more you *do*, the more you *learn*. So—to learn more about your community and its problems, attend meetings, join committees, take active part in projects for civic betterment. A kind of magic goes to work when you get personally involved in a project. Suddenly it's *your* project, and you care deeply about its success or failure. So if you're an apathetic voter but feel guilty about it, learn to be enthusiastic by learning all you can about *all* candidates, then get out and work for the candidate of your choice. You'll be a better citizen, and you'll get a fine feeling of pride from the fact that you pitched in and worked for your town and your country.

As you continue learning you may want to take another adult education course. If so, here's how to decide on the right course for *you*:

- Whether you want one course, or are planning a complete program of adult education for yourself, don't decide hastily. Talk to an adult education director or a school guidance counselor before making your final decision on what courses to sign up for. They can keep you from making mistakes—like signing up for a course in written Spanish when the best for you may be conversational Spanish.

- If you're seeking a vocational course, make sure you choose a field in which you are really interested. Take aptitude tests to find out whether you are capable of doing that kind of work. For information on where to take such tests, and their cost, ask the director of adult education in your local school system, a high-school guidance counselor, or a high-school principal.

- You may want to consult your employer before taking a specific kind of technical course. He may be able to suggest one that would be more useful to you.